

Fate of Report on News Leaks:

It's Leaked

By Daniel F. Gilmore
United Press International

A security expert says if the government had carried through on its investigations of security leaks, Daniel Ellsberg, the man who released the Pentagon Papers, would have been uncovered as a security risk long before Watergate.

W. Donald Stewart, former espionage supervisor for the FBI and then chief investigator for the Defense Department, claims in a report to be released this week that U.S. intelligence and the government operate "like amateur night" when it comes to leaks and associated matters.

In his report Stewart identifies Elliot Richardson as one of the government officials who permitted Ellsberg to look at classified State Department cables which led to an anti-Vietnam War story. Nothing was done so as not to embarrass Richardson, a well-connected bureaucrat who later became defense secretary and attorney general.

Stewart's contention that investigations into security leaks are usually swept under the rug is contained in a report he will deliver Wednesday or Thursday before the Senate Intelligence subcommittee on secrecy and disclosure. In a town which thrives on leaks, Stewart's report was leaked to UPI.

STEWART SAID CLASSIFIED leaks during the Vietnam war which were published in The New York Times in 1968 were referred to the FBI for prosecution.

"Because the new secretary of defense, Clark Clifford, desired to have better relations with the press, the FBI was told that the Defense Department had changed its mind." The CIA also decided not to pursue the case.

An investigation, Stewart said, "would have uncovered Daniel Ellsberg (a former Defense Department employee) as its source. His identification would have spared us the Pentagon Papers, the Pentagon Plumbers and all that followed, including Watergate and President Nixon's resignation. Ellsberg confirmed he would have been trapped."

A 1970 Washington Star article on Vietnam was traced to Elliot Richardson

who "was responsible for allowing Ellsberg to review highly classified cables," Stewart said.

THE MATTER WAS made known to Secretary of State William Rogers, Stewart said, but was never reported to the FBI — "it couldn't be without Richardson being accused also."

"Each U.S. agency and military department operates independently of each other with practically no internal coordination," Stewart said. "Matters of national security interest are often buried rather than have the military department or government agency suffer any embarrassment resulting from a 'goof' by one of its employees."

"Some persons have been discharged to solve (a) military commander's problem," Stewart said. "One was granted immunity to confess an espionage contact by the person's commanding officer . . . Investigations (of leaks) are often aborted because of characters and 'privileged leakers' (high government officials and members of the House and Senate) involved."

The situation, Stewart said, brings to mind a memorable quote from the cartoon character Pogo: "We have met the enemy and they are us."

The government would not have very many security breaches, he said, "if the investigatory process was allowed to proceed to the end which would result in criminal and/or administrative action taking place."

Sometimes there were potentially disastrous mistakes caused by "sheer carelessness," he said, citing the loss for about a month in early 1970 of the top secret Annual Report of Nuclear Stockpile Information sent to Defense Ministers of NATO countries.

IT WAS MISTAKENLY sent by ordinary surface mail rather than hand-carried by couriers of the Defense Intelligence Agency.

"We managed to track the mail from Washington to New York, by boat to Europe and thereafter by train to certain foreign countries. The mail traveled all through Yugoslavia and finally showed up in Athens, Greece."

If it hadn't been tampered with in Yugoslavia, he said, then Yugoslav intelligence deserved to be abolished.

A December 1971 incident involving Yeoman Charles Radford and a sailor working in the mail room of the National Security Council concerned, Stewart said, "the transmittal of highly classified documents stolen from the briefcases of Dr. Henry Kissinger and (White House Chief of Staff) Gen. Alexander Haig." It was "a classic case of an investigation being impeded by not only the White House but by Sen. John C. Stennis and his Armed Service committee."

"Although Radford confessed to purloining these documents and his boss, Rear Adm. Robert O. Welander, and Welander's boss, Adm. Thomas M. Moorer, admitted receipt of them, no action was taken," Stewart said.

THE YEOMAN AND the sailor were transferred to posts of their choosing and "are still un-defused time bombs and still enjoy the status of the 'Sacred White Cow of India,'" Stewart said.

"Never have I seen the White House so shook up," said Stewart, when reporter William Beecher disclosed in The New York Times in March 1971 that the United States had asked the Soviets to join in a missile moratorium.

"President Nixon was furious because Beecher's article disclosed our fall-back position in the SALT discussions planned in the next day or two," he said.

"Again this investigation met with obstruction," Stewart said, after it "led to the doorstep of Sen. Henry Jackson." The FBI was never given authorization to interview Beecher.

Although Beecher was the subject of 22 leak investigations, Stewart said, he was later appointed deputy assistant defense secretary in 1973 and acting assistant defense secretary in 1974-75.